OPTIMISM FOR 2021

At the Bidwell House Museum, 2020 was a year of postponements. Our opening celebration was changed to an online concert a few weeks later; our planned August 1 summer fundraising party was moved to a virtual party at the end of August; an historic 18th century Reenactment weekend we had scheduled for September 2020 was pushed back an entire year; and our plan to celebrate the Museum’s 30th anniversary was also pushed back to 2021.

These postponements were in addition to the outright cancellation of house tours and a few of our planned history talks. For a while things felt bleak, but this upheaval pushed us into new exciting directions we never would have proposed otherwise, like learning how to share our programs on Zoom, creating a self-guided outdoor tour, expanding our vegetable garden to donate produce to the community and creating our well received weekly newsletter Bidwell Lore. In 2021 we look forward to the upcoming season with cautious optimism, taking the lessons we learned in 2020 to improve outreach, programs and experience for our visitors and members. We will celebrate our 30th season, plan history talks that can be viewed in person or online, design outdoor events that are fun and educational and continue sharing fascinating stories via Bidwell Lore. Thank you for being a Bidwell House Museum member in 2020 and for supporting us during these trying times. As we embark on the Museum’s 30th season we see how strong we are as an organization and look forward to sharing our stories with you for the next 30 years.

BIDWELL HOUSE
AWARDED TWO GRANTS

In late December and then again in early January, the staff and Trustees were thrilled to learn that the Bidwell House Museum had been awarded two grants to help cover operating costs. In the first award the Fitzpatrick Trust, a local foundation based in Stockbridge who provided a generous grant to the Capital Campaign in 2017, notified the Museum that they would be receiving $20,000 to help with general operational needs.

In the second award the Museum received $22,000 from the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program of the Mass Cultural Council to help reimburse the Museum for costs in the fall of 2020. Both of these programs were created to help non-profit organizations in Massachusetts, most of whom had lost significant income in 2020 due to the negative impact of COVID-19. These grants allow the Museum to pay the staff, keep the lights on and work through the winter to plan the 2021 season. The Museum was delighted that our applications were approved and so grateful that the Museum’s ongoing work was supported by both the Fitzpatrick Foundation and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.
GRATITUDE 2021
by Rob Hoogs, President of the Board of Directors

Spring is coming, and we are grateful at the Bidwell House Museum for many things:

• A beautiful snowy winter...which will soon give way to glorious spring flowers.

• Neighbors and visitors walking, hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, children sledding, dogs frolicking – all enjoying! More people have been on the grounds and trails over the past year than ever!

• Wonderful virtual lectures attended by hundreds of new and old friends, given by wonderful speakers about the Native Americans who thrived on this land for hundreds of generations.

• Rick Wilcox (a descendant of Rev. Bidwell) who has researched and written over fifty articles for the “Bidwell Lore” weekly series.

• Members and volunteers, new and old, who have stepped up to continue their support of the Bidwell House Museum during the past year.

• Rev. Adonijah Bidwell and his descendants who built and furnished the house and worked the land.

• Robert Ensign who performed the initial restoration of the house in the 1920s and documented the before and after conditions with beautiful photographs.

• Jack Hargis and David Brush, who owned the house from 1960 through the 1980s, and preserved, restored and furnished the house with period antiques, finally bequeathing the property to become a museum open to the public.

• Bill Brockman and Jack Jefferson who were the Museum’s founding directors and prime movers.

• The charter members of the museum who have been with us for our entire 30+ year existence.

• The dedicated and hard-working volunteer Board of Directors who have carried on the founders’ vision.

• Heather Kowalski, the museum’s Executive Director, and Erin Hunt, the museum’s Administrative Assistant, Curator, and Caretaker. We couldn’t do this without you!

• And, finally, you! Our members, supporters, consumers, and cheerleaders. You make our story resonate.

Thank you!

OUR MISSION

The Bidwell House Museum is a New England heritage site providing a personal encounter with history, early American home life, and the Berkshire landscape through its land, house and collection. The Museum is a non-profit educational institution for the benefit of the community and today’s audiences of all ages, dedicated to preservation, scholarship and enjoyment of the landmark site.

THANK YOU

2020 Business Partners

Alarms of Berkshire County
Bookloft
Canyon Ranch
Domaney’s Liquors
Fairview Hospital
Tryon Construction
Wheeler and Taylor

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to these businesses for supporting the Museum in 2020
MEMORIES OF JAN EMMONS, 1929–2021
by George Emmons

When Jan and I were approaching ninety years of age and both daughters were living a long days drive away, it seemed to be time to sell our home at 585 Main Rd and move closer to both of them. We had put our heart and soul into renovating the vacant cottage there by moving it to one side, then digging a full basement, reinforcing all the structural beams and then moving it back onto the original foundation. Jan had done a phenomenal job of decorating the new basement walls with cartoon characters of our four grandsons misbehaving. The whole house had become a truly picturesque landmark that we treasured. Bill Brockman had been the agent for selling it to us and said we should list it with his new man Chapin Fish, who he said was the smartest he had ever met. And sure enough he found a buyer after just two weeks. Then we were quickly gone, leaving behind perhaps the best twenty years of our lives together.

Jan died a short time ago and my memory of happiness together is now mixed in with our move to Fairhaven, just around the corner from our daughter Elizabeth. The illustration on this page is a drawing for my column for Wanderer Magazine showing Jan sitting in our living room at Christmas time, looking out of our picture windows toward the coastline wildlife. The drawing shows her needlepoint pillows and a decorated tree, waiting for a gathering of family together. Like in Monterey, she had planted and landscaped all around the property, just as she had planted gladiolas around the Monterey Church, town hall, post office, store and library. With her talent she had been chair of the Bidwell House Museum gardening committee and on annual clean up days in the flower beds, she served lunch and Bloody Marys to volunteers.

Jan was also a very talented artist and illustrator, designing and painting the cover of invitations to the first Bidwell fundraising parties, one of which was at Trustee President Bob Duffy’s house at Rock Ridge, with cartoon drawings of Lowland Farm vehicles and antique automobiles (see below). She was well known as a very creative member of the Quilting Club run by her best friend Barbara Tryon at Lowland Farm. And as a new resident at the corner of Main Rd. and Bidwell Ave., she was a popular person to visit around the neighborhood by Marie Maxwell, Betsy Camp and Paula Moats wither mother who was also a Bidwell. Paula also moved near us in Fairhaven and we were very happy the friendship closely continued. Other Monterey residents that lived further down Main Rd like Bonner McAllester, Joe Baker and Ray Coddington, always thought of Jan when they drove by into town, tending her gardens.

She had been a long suffering and supporting wife for all of the time and energy I spent at the Hatchery and on the buildings and grounds committee at the Bidwell House Museum, not to mention a monthly column and drawing for the Monterey News. Editor Steve Moore visited us in Fairhaven and Jan soon became his best friendly critic after receiving every monthly issue. Both he and his wife Wendy suggest that I remember Jan planting flowers everywhere and when Spring comes they will come to life and bloom in honor of her green thumb that brings her memories in Monterey and Fairhaven to live again like the reincarnation spirit of her love for gardening.
BIDWELL LORE – JUST THE FACTS

In the spring of 2020, as the world went into lock-down to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Bidwell staff and Trustees began brainstorming ideas for content we could share digitally, and from that the idea of the weekly series Bidwell Lore was born. The series has been running for close to a year now and we still have a lot of content to share, but we thought it would be fun in this edition of the winter newsletter to share some interesting facts about the series and the history we have shared. All editions of Bidwell Lore are available to read on our website at www.bidwellhousemuseum.org/blog/

1. Between April 2020 and February 2021 the Museum produced 44 editions of Bidwell Lore!

2. Almost all of the content in the series was written by descendants of Adonijah Bidwell: Rick Wilcox, Wilma Spice and Russ Taylor.

3. The only true diary we have from Reverend Adonijah Bidwell is one from his time as Chaplain in the Royal Navy in 1745 where he witnessed the siege of Louisbourg. You can read about his time there in posts from April and May.

4. In 2019 the Museum was gifted as set of pewter dishes that originally belonged to Adonijah’s 2nd wife and the mother of his children, Jemima Bidwell. Wilma Spice, the donor of the pewter wrote a guest post about this in July.

5. Of Reverend Adonijah Bidwell’s four children, by far the most accomplished was second son Barnabas Bidwell who had a life marked by both ample success and stark tragedy. We spent a three months sharing his stories, which you can read starting with the blog post from August 18.

6. The children of Reverend’s Bidwell’s daughter Jemima traveled far and wide and ended up in New York, Illinois, Hawaii, Michigan, and New Jersey. One son, George Washington, even moved to Cuba!

7. Finally, we shifted the focus of Bidwell Lore in December to begin telling the story of the Mohicans in order to complement our winter lecture series, Hidden in Plain Sight: Native Peoples and the Struggle to Recover Their History in New England. We have been honored to give over a few posts to a series written by the Stockbridge-Munsee titled Magnificent Mohicans. In those posts from January and February you can learn about noteworthy Mohicans Konkapot, Wauwampequonnout, Daniel Nimham, Umpachenee, “King” Solomon Uhhaunauwaunmut and Hendrik Aupaumut.

We plan to continue Bidwell Lore for as long as we have stories to tell. If you are interested in signing up for our emails, scroll down to the bottom of our homepage.
HERITAGE GARDEN DONATIONS

In the spring of 2020, and in response to the pandemic, former Bidwell intern Joe Makuc approached the Museum about expanding the Heritage Vegetable garden in order to donate produce to those in need in the Berkshires. Working with gardener Ruth Green and garden intern Charlie Annecharico, carrots, peas, cabbages, kale, beets, onions, squash and beans were planted, with the amount and variety of squash being expanded over previous years. During the summer, former Bidwell interns and Joe's siblings Marya Makuc and Nadia Makuc harvested the vegetables for donation.

We estimate that around 85 lbs of produce was donated to the Great Barrington People's Pantry and to Monterey's Pantry Pickup. Thank you to Joe, Marya, Nadia, Ruth and Charlie for all of the work to facilitate these donations!
The wigwam village and garden behind the Museum last summer

A new weatherproof sign on the Native American Interpretive Trail

The Museum at sunset in October

The new accessible carriage barn after the addition of a wood floor and kitchenette
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Erin Hunt, Administrative Manager and Caretaker

THANK YOU

The Museum would not be where it is today without the incredible efforts of Jack Hargis and David Brush. To honor their work as a part of our 30th season, we are putting together a small exhibition and looking for stories about the pair. If you knew Jack or David and would be willing to have a conversation about them with the Museum please contact Executive Director Heather Kowalski at bidwellhouse@gmail.com.

Thank you!